

Message Text

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SUBJECT: "EXPRESS" EDITORIAL ATTACKS CHURCH ACTIVISTS

REF: MANILA 13214

1. HARD ON HEELS OF WARNINGS THIRD ECHELON OF COMMUNIST PARTY LEADERSHIP ALIGNED WITH "CHRISTIAN LEFT" POSES NEW DANGER TO NATION (REFTEL), AUGUST 31 "DAILY EXPRESS" RAN UNUSUAL FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL ENTITLED, "LET US LEARN SOME BITTER LESSONS OF OTHER NATIONS." IT WARNS OF ALLIANCE BETWEEN "THIRD ECHELON SUBVERSIVES" AND "DISGRUNTLED CHURCH ELEMENTS AND PERHAPS THE MNLF" AIMED AT OVERTHROWING THE GOVERNMENT. AS EXAMPLES CHURCH EFFORTS TO SUBVERT GOVERNMENT, EDITORIAL CITES:

(A) PRIEST WHO INSTIGATED MOUNTAIN TRIBES TO PROTEST CHICO RIVER DAM;

(B) PRIEST WHO OPPOSED MINDANAO POWER PROJECT;

(C) PRIESTS WHO, IN GUISE OF "DENOUNCING INJUSTICE," ASSAIL GOVERNMENT DECISIONS AND POLICIES;

(D) PRIESTS AND NUNS WHO ENCOURAGE MANILA SQUATTERS TO OPPOSE GOVERNMENT SLUM CLEARANCE EFFORTS;

(E) CLERGY WHO INCITE WORKERS TO STRIKE AND THEREBY
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VIOLATE LABOR LAWS.

2. "EXPRESS" EDITORIAL STATES, "IN MANY PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, PRIESTS WHO WOULD ALSO ASSUME THE ROLE OF CAESAR SEEK, FROM THE PROTECTIVE MANTLE OF THE PULPIT, TO FOMENT DISCONTENT AND UNREST AMONG THE POPULACE, RESORTING EVEN TO DISTORTIONS OF THE TRUTH TO ACHIEVE THEIR ENDS." "EXPRESS" ADMITS THAT PRIESTS ENGAGED IN THESE ACTIVITIES ARE A MINORITY, BUT CLAIMS THEY ARE HIGHLY ARTICULATE AND READILY BELIEVED. EDITORIAL ARGUES THAT THEIR RELIGIOUS CALLING HAS BEEN WARPED BY THEIR HATRED FOR GOVERNMENT. THIS WAS SAME HATRED THAT "BROUGHT TROUBLE IN SPAIN AND MADE PERU AND BOLIVIA UNSTABLE." IF THIS MINORITY OF CLERICS JOINS WITH THE FORCES OF THE LEFT AND SUCCEEDS IN OVERTHROWING THE GOVERNMENT, LEBANESE TRAGEDY COULD BE DUPLICATED IN THE PHILIPPINES. "THIS IS SPECTER THAT HAUNTS US TODAY IN THE LIGHT OF INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES THAT THE SUBVERSIVE AND THE RADICAL CLERGY ARE PLANNING TO JOIN FORCES.

3. COMMENT: "EXPRESS" EDITORIAL SEEMS PART OF NEW EFFORT TO INTIMIDATE ACTIVIST CLERICS. DEFSEC ENRILE HAMMERED AWAY AT THIS THEME IN CABINET MEETING AUGUST 31. REGIME COULD BE CONTEMPLATING TEMPORARY ROUND UP OF ACTIVISTS, PERHAPS INCLUDING SOME CLERICS, PRIO TO IMF MEETING TO FORESTALL DEMONSTRATIONS, APPEALS TO VISITORS, ETC. SIMILAR ROUND UPS PRECEDED PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT AND MARCOS' TRIPS ABROAD EARLIER THIS YEAR. LINKING ACTIVISTS AND COMMUNISTS ALSO AIMED AT EXPLOITING FEARS OF CONSERVATIVE CHURCH LEADERSHIP; RENDERING IT QUIESCENT; AND GIVING GOVERNMENT FREE HAND IN DEALING WITH ACTIVISTS. OVER LONG TERM, "THREAT" POSED BY THIRD ECHELON COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP ALLIED WITH CHRISTIAN LEFT JUSTIFIES CONTINUATION OF MARTIAL LAW NOW THAT NPA "WIPED OUT" AND MNLF "ON THE ROPES."

4. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE MARCOS WISHES AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH BUT HIS STRATEGY OF LINKING CLERICAL ACTIVISTS AND COMMUNISTS PLUS OVERDRAWN AND UNCONVINCING COMPARISONS OF PHILIPPINES WITH SPAIN, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LEBANON, ETC., COULD PRECIPITATE REACTION HE WISHES AVOID. JUSTICE SECRETARY ABAD SANTOS GOADED CARDINAL SIN INTO REACTING WHEN HE CRITICIZED CLERGY'S USE OF PULPIT IN JULY (MANILA 9979). NEVERTHELESS, PRESIDENT MARCOS REMAINS A SEGURISTA. PRESUMABLY, HE BELIEVES RISK IS TOLERABLE AND THAT HE CAN NEUTRALIZE CLERICAL ACTIVISTS WITHOUT INCURRING ENMITY OF CHURCH LEADERS. SULLIVAN

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